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BOOK REVIEWS.

OLD VIRGINIA AND HER NEIGHBOURS. By John Fiske. Publishers: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., Boston and New York, 1897. Two volumes, crown, 8vo., gilt top, \$4.00.

We have read this work with a feeling of much pleasure and satisfaction. It would seem as if the day had at last come when Virginia can expect a fair and just treatment at the hands of a Northern historical writer. That "next age," to which Lord Bacon appealed for the vindication of his claims to fame, and to which Virginia, since the beginning of the late war, has also appealed, is fast approaching when the great part which she has played on the American stage from the first, will be ungrudgingly admitted by all historical writers in this country in whatever division of it they may live.

One has only to read the recent history of the United States, by Goldwin Smith, to see how, amidst the cloud of prejudice, detraction and ignorance, which has been abroad at the North during the last two generations especially, the mind of a really brilliant writer may be warped. The account given by him of the Colonial age in Virginia, is deserving chiefly of censure, but nevertheless it is characteristic of the school of Northern writers to which Smith belongs, although an Englishman. Prejudice and ignorance, the twin sisters, distinguish a large part of it. The ignorance certainly was not justified, for long before the composition of the book began, Virginian scholars had begun those researches which Professor Fiske has used to so much advantage in the work under review. To us, the two most interesting chapters in "Old Virginia and Her Neighbours," are those devoted to the vindication of John Smith and Nathaniel Bacon. It is not going too far to say that these two chapters in which the facts and the inferences are marshalled with so much skill and fairness, could not have been written in their present form but for the pamphlets of Hon. W. W. Henry and Professor Charles Poin Dexter, of this State in the first case, and the original materials, published in *Wm. and Mary Quarterly* and the *Va. Historical Magazine*, in the other.

Professor Fiske has sought with untiring energy and patience all the new light that was procurable, and has used it with such telling effect, that his work is a distinctly original contribution to the history of Virginia in the Colonial age. Throughout the book, there breathes a generous and high minded spirit. The nobility of the man, the author, as well as the unsurpassed variety, the striking picturesqueness of the subject are apparent on every page. No Virginian steeped to the very lips

in love of his native soil, could be more responsive than Professor Fiske to all that is lofty in the leading characters of Virginia in that age, and to all that is stirring and inspiring in the principal events. The discriminating keenness of his insight and the broadness of his sympathies, are shown in every word in which he sets before us, men of such sharply contrasted tempers as Ferrer, Smith, Bacon, and Berkeley. If he has any prejudices, they lean to the generous side.

What is the result? Not only one of the most charming books that was ever written about Virginia, but also, in our opinion, the justest, the fairest, the most sympathetic, that was ever written by one who had no personal knowledge of the old plantation system, and the social and political influences, which it at once created and sustained. Professor Fiske omits not a single dramatic incident which will bring before us the very body and pressure of the times. From period to period the serious questions at issue, the far reaching principles involved, are set before us with the utmost lucidity, but in every part, the narrative is lighted up with all the picturesque details, the personal episodes which the records afford. The Colonial age speaks to us from his graphic page and if at any time the voice seems a little distant, it will be found to be in those branches of the subject in which the investigations of our local scholars have not as yet been carried very far. It is for this reason that, Prof. Fiske's work is a more faithful picture of the seventeenth century than of the eighteenth. It is of the seventeenth century that he really treats, not because that century had for his purpose, beyond being the formative period, greater importance than the eighteenth, but because the materials as yet for a study of the eighteenth are still incomplete and defective. In this particular, we think Professor Fiske's treatment lacks true proportion, and in a sense, his volumes show more plainly what is yet to be done by Virginian scholars than what has already been done.

When all the materials have been brought to light and made accessible to scholars—when the State, the county, the foreign records relating to Virginia in the 18th century have been published—it will be seen that it was the 18th century that is the most interesting part of the colonial age in Virginia, and that a study of the 17th century has its truest significance in being an introduction to the 18th. It was in the 18th that Virginia saw the full development of the institutions, the foundations of which had been laid in the 17th. It was then that the social life reached its most perfect and striking form; it was then that the largest fortunes were accumulated and enjoyed; and, above all, it was then, and then only, that slavery had a controlling influence upon every interest of each community.

Even in the treatment of the 17th century, we can see that Prof. Fiske fails in breadth whenever he is dealing with branches of the subject in which the original investigation as yet is meagre. We would have liked to have had a more detailed account of the origin of the higher planting

class, the condition of the church, the educational influences and the administration of law. It is these branches of Prof. Fiske's general subject which so far have not received the attention they deserve from those making researches in the original records.

In the midst of such a profusion of interesting details set forth with all the art of an accomplished master of style and with the general accuracy of a great scholar, it is difficult to select points for critical comment. We have noted a few, which we will take up as they come, without regard to their connection.

I. We are not sure of the entire accuracy of the statement that the colony was "started upon the communistic plan" (page 142, Vol. I). The London Company was an ordinary joint stock company, with a large number of employees or servants, as they were called in that age. There was certainly no real analogy between the early Virginian and the communistic communities at one time so common at the North, and which, we believe, still exist in Russia. It was just as if a joint stock company were to take up so much land in some unoccupied part of the West, and cultivate the soil with its own laborers. The only difference between such a company and the London would be in the form of compensation given the laborers. In the case of the London Company, it was food, drink, lodging, &c., with a promise of an ultimate absolute ownership in a small area of soil; in the case of the western land company it would be so many dollars in currency. "In planting corn, in felling trees, in repairing the fortifications, even in hunting and fishing," the employee of the London Company was not working for the community, but simply for the company, of which he was no more a member than a cowboy is of the joint stock company which owns the ranch on which he tends cattle.

In the after life of the Colony, the early relations of the London Joint Stock Company with its employees were repeated in the instance of every planter who worked a large number of agricultural servants. There were just as many motives for indolence in such servants as in the servants of the Company. The only difference was that the status of the servants' rights had now been fixed, and could not be ignored, and he was also subject to a discipline which it was impossible for the Company to enforce in the first years of the settlement. The extension of tobacco culture, giving a profitable crop, was also calculated to make the system of labor more stable and satisfactory.

II. Prof. Fiske dwells upon the fact (p. 14, vol. II.) that the rural aristocracy of England, in the 17th century, kept in touch with the tradesmen and artisans, indicating he remarks a kind of public sentiment very different from that which afterward grew up in the Southern States under the influence of slavery, "which proclaimed an antagonism between industry and gentility that is contrary to the whole spirit of English civilization."

We think it incorrect to attribute this growth entirely to the "influence of slavery." We doubt whether the sentiment in the South, before the war, as to the antagonism of manual labor and gentility was one whit stronger than the sentiment of the rural aristocracy of England in the same matter is to-day, a sentiment which has only become more and more marked with the progress of the present century. The antagonism is really the growth of the modern age, and we venture to doubt whether its existence is anywhere more clearly recognized than in the North of the present times. It was the noble privilege of the gentlemen of the South that they were relieved of the necessity of manual labor. In the management of their estates, with so many complex interests, they were not only called upon to exercise a ceaseless vigilance, an untiring attention to details—a most exacting form of industry—but they also acquired that capacity for governing men and for conducting affairs which made the public representatives of the Southern Colonies and States, the equals of any who have played a great part on the stage of civic life.

III. Referring to the class of agricultural servants Prof. Fiske says "their lives were in theory protected by law, but where an indentured servant came to his death from prolonged ill usage or from excessive punishment or even from sudden violence it was not easy to get a verdict against the master." This, we think, is much too strongly stated. The code of laws relating to the servants was very humane, and the county records show that in no respect were the County Courts more vigilant than in protecting the servants in their rights, whether arising by statutory law or custom.

IV. To what extent the tobacco currency (except so far that it was very cumbrous), affected the general progress of Virginia in the Colonial age, is a question open to discussion. Practically from the beginning, tobacco was the currency of the community, and the growth of the colony was steady and sound. Even when tobacco sank to a very low price, it is doubtful whether it could be accurately compared to "rag" or "cheap" money (Vol. II p. 3). The intrinsic value of tobacco as a currency, was always measured by the standard of pounds, shillings and pence, a perfectly stable standard. A bushel of corn might cost twenty pounds of tobacco one month, and twenty-five the next, owing to the fluctuation in the value of tobacco, but no inconveniency was occasioned so far as tobacco served as currency, as the value was calculated in English money. The tobacco currency, from another point of view, was a bullion currency, its value from year to year being fixed by the foreign market. It had no face value and therefore there was no fluctuation between a face and a real value, the bane of cheap money. Substantially, the currency system of early Colonial Virginia was a return to the old system of barter and exchange, in which neither dear nor cheap money plays a direct part.

V. "After the abolition of the African slave in 1808 had increased the demand for Virginia bred slaves in the States farther south, the very idea of emancipation faded out of memory." (Vol. II, p. 191). This is a serious error. One of the greatest debates that ever took place in the Virginia Legislature, was in the winter of 1831-32, on the proposition to gradually abolish slavery in the State, and the measure was only defeated by a few votes.

In the July number we will continue our comments on Prof. Fiske's most valuable and charming work.

SKETCHES FROM OLD VIRGINIA. By A. G. Bradley. Published by the Macmillan Company. Price, \$1.50.

Contents: Introduction; The Doctor; An Old Virginia Foxhunter; On the old Bethel 'Pike; Parkin, the Saddler; The Poor Whites of the Mountains; The Virginia Quail; Marse Bob after the War; Two Episodes of Rumbling Creek; Some Plantation Memories; A Turkey Hunter.

We have read these "Sketches from Old Virginia" with a peculiar interest, and venture to predict that as time goes on they will be considered to have very great historical value. There are many accounts and sketches of life in Virginia in the age of slavery, both in colonial times and after the Revolution; but these sketches of Mr. Bradley present the only adequate picture known to us of social and economic conditions prevailing after the war, in that short period when the old order lingered only as an echo lingers, after the original sound has gone forever. It was a period of extraordinary interest, when the last representatives of the old regime were rapidly passing away one by one, and when the old agricultural conditions were fast disappearing in the new. It was the twilight of the old days. It was well that there should have been amongst us at this pathetic hour a writer of quick insight, observant eye and great power of sympathy, to record what he saw of life and character in the State. Mr. Bradley is an Englishman and a foreigner, but not the lamented Bagby was more tenderly appreciative of the humorous and touching sides of old Virginian individuality than he is. Where can we find a more sympathetic, more appreciative, more humorous sketch of Virginian character than in Mr. Bradley's "The Doctor?" It is full of the warmth of genuine life. Not a detail is lacking to bring the old Virginian directly home to the reader. The pathos may not be quite as moving as Mr. Page's in similar sketches, but the humor is even more effective. In the article, "On the old Bethel 'Pike," there is crowded all the graphic details of the great changes which have taken place in the agricultural aspect of old Virginia as well as in her homes since the new regime began—changes produced partly by the abolition of slavery, but even more so by the decline in the value of farming products, owing to the opening up of the West. In "Parkin, the Saddler," we have a sketch of a member of the lower class, as in "The Doctor" we have a